

**First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
River Falls, Wisconsin**

**December 12, 2021**



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN**

December 12, 2021

*Third Sunday in Advent*

10:00 am

<b>Gathering</b>
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“Joy can only be real if people look upon their life as a service and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness.”  
~Leo Tolstoy

<p>Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today! Join us for coffee in the Fellowship Hall following the 10:00 worship service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The Nursery is available for young children.</li><li>- Church Mouse activity bags are available for children.</li><li>- Large print bulletins and hearing-impaired devices are available from the ushers.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Please stand when noted by the *</li></ul></li><li>- Congregation responses are in bold.</li></ul>	<p><i>No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!</i></p> <p><i>As Jesus' courageous disciples, living God's grace, we strive to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Worship faithfully</i></li><li>- <i>Welcome openly</i></li><li>- <i>Grow spiritually</i></li><li>- <i>Care passionately</i></li><li>- <i>Serve generously</i></li></ul>
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**GATHERING MUSIC**

**WELCOME**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

**L:** Today is the third Sunday in Advent,

**P:** **We gather today to listen to God's Word.**

**L:** Advent is a season filled with opportunity to respond to God's wonderful news,

**P:** **To hear the joyful news; to respond humbly to God's wondrous promise fulfilled.**

(Light the third Advent candle)

**L:** We light this third candle,

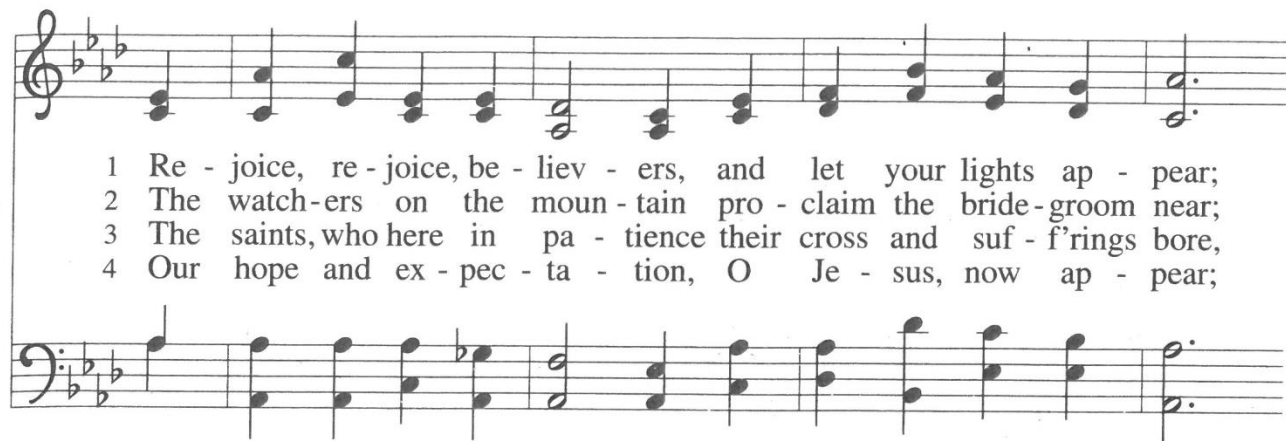
**P:** **To symbolize the JOY that we can know in humble service.**

**L:** God, help every ear and every heart be filled with humility as we receive the joy of your good news in Jesus Christ.

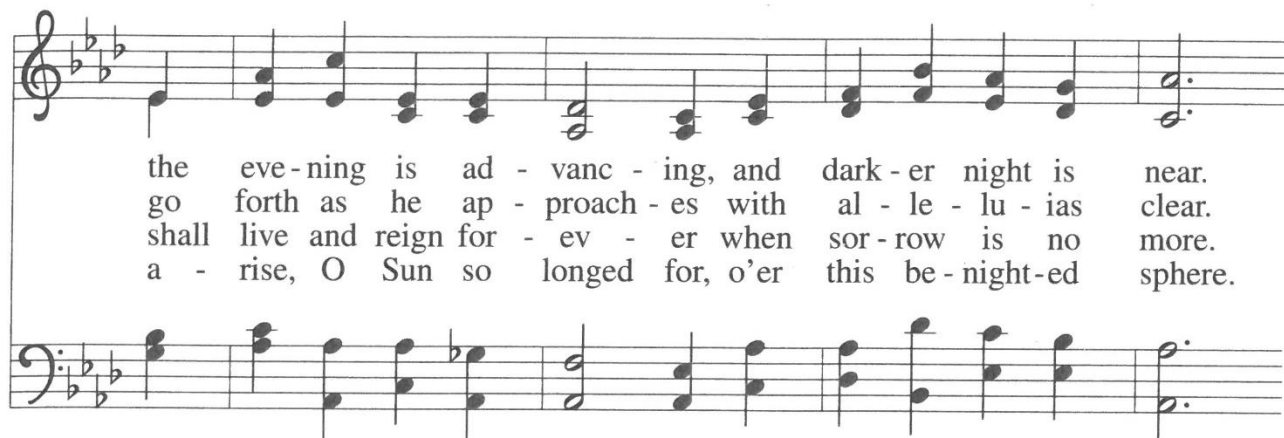
**P:** **We are HUMBLY PRAYING,**

**All:** **“Come to us today.”**

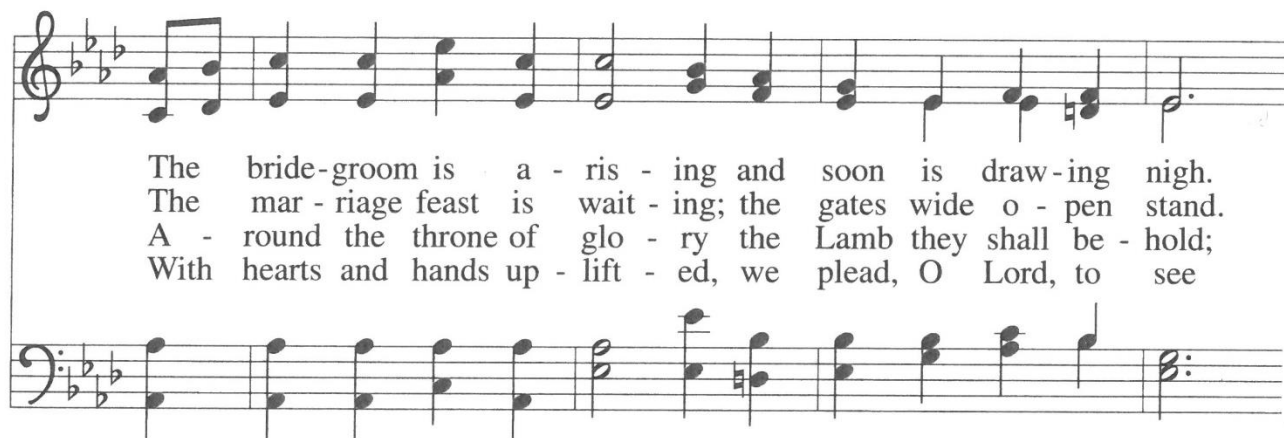
*Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers*



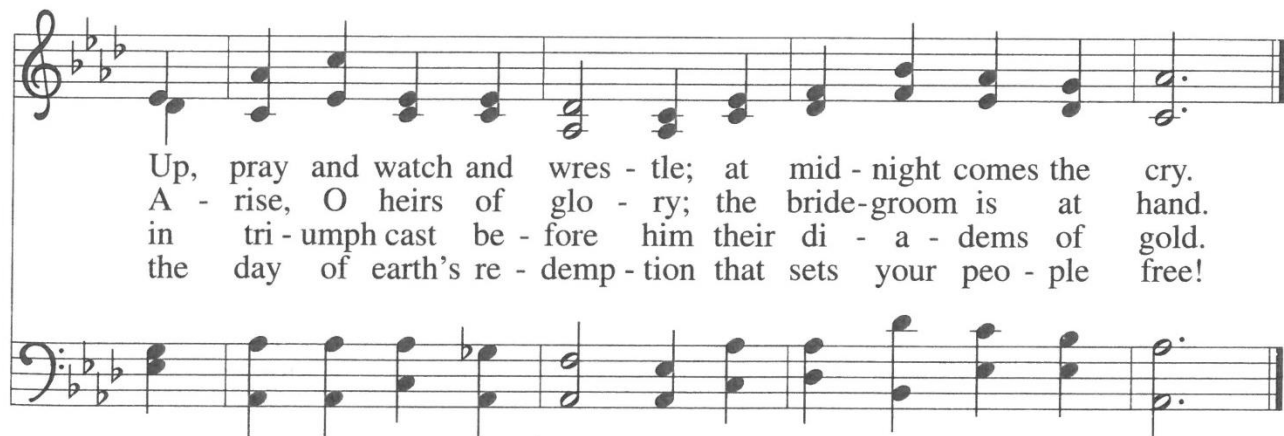
1 Re - joice, re - joice, be - liev - ers, and let your lights ap - pear;  
 2 The watch-ers on the moun - tain pro - claim the bride-groom near;  
 3 The saints, who here in pa - tience their cross and suf - f'ings bore,  
 4 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;



the eve - ning is ad - vanc - ing, and dark - er night is near.  
 go forth as he ap - proach - es with al - le - lu - ias clear.  
 shall live and reign for - ev - er when sor - row is no more.  
 a - rise, O Sun so longed for, o'er this be - night - ed sphere.



The bride-groom is a - ris - ing and soon is draw - ing nigh.  
 The mar - riage feast is wait - ing; the gates wide o - pen stand.  
 A - round the throne of glo - ry the Lamb they shall be - hold;  
 With hearts and hands up - lift - ed, we plead, O Lord, to see



Up, pray and watch and wres - tle; at mid - night comes the cry.  
 A - rise, O heirs of glo - ry; the bride-groom is at hand.  
 in tri - umph cast be - fore him their di - a - dems of gold.  
 the day of earth's re - demp - tion that sets your peo - ple free!

**\*OPENING PRAYER**

Forgive us, Lord, if we leave little room for wonder in our lives. Too often we are obsessed with control and explanations. Surprises throw us off balance and the unknown scares us. During this Advent season amaze us again with your grace and help us recognize your marvelous deeds, which you are working all around us. Amen.

**\*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

**L:** Hear the Good News! The Messiah comes to bring good news to the oppressed,

**P:** **To bind up the brokenhearted,**

**L:** To proclaim liberty to the captives,

**P:** **And release to the prisoners.**

**L:** Jesus comes in the form of a little bitty baby,

**P:** **To save us from our sin.**

**All** **Let us spread the Good News! Amen.**

**L:** May the peace of the Lord be with you all.

**P:** **And also with you.**

**\*PASSING OF THE PEACE**

(Please greet one another with signs of peace)

**\*GLORIA**

*He Came Down*

*He came down that we may have hope;*

*He came down that we may have hope; Hallelujah forevermore.*

*He came down that we may have peace;*

*He came down that we may have peace; Hallelujah forevermore.*

*He came down that we may have joy;*

*He came down that we may have joy; Hallelujah forevermore.*

<b>Hearing the Word</b>
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**SCRIPTURE LESSON**

**Philippians 4:4-9**

**BAPTISM OF LYDIA KATHERINE KOECHER**

***Welcome and Presentation***

**L:** They were bringing children to Jesus that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant, and said to them.

**P:** **“Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”**

**L:** Members and friends in Christ, we gather to celebrate God’s gift of grace in the baptism of Lydia Katherine Koecher. To us a child is given!

**P:** **Thanks be to God!**

## **Address**

**L:** Baptism is the sacrament... the call to be a part of God's people.

**P:** **This is the water of baptism. Out of this water, we rise with new life, forgiven of sin and one in Christ, members of Christ's body.**

## **Questions**

### **Act of Baptism**

**L:** The Lord be with you.

**P:** And also with you.

### **Baptismal Song**                      ***"Child of Blessing, Child of Promise"***

***Child of blessing, child of promise, baptized with the Spirit's sign;  
with this water God has sealed you unto love and grace divine.***

***Child of God your loving Parent, learn to know whose child you are.  
Grow to laugh and sing and worship, trust and love God more than all.***

## **Prayer**

**L:** Let us pray. We give you thanks, O God, for this child and the grace acknowledged here in water and the Spirit. Embrace us all as sons and daughters in the one household of your love. Grant us grace to receive and nurture this new member of the body of Christ.

**P:** **Give to the newly baptized: strength for life's journey, courage in time of suffering, the joy of faith, the freedom of love, and the hope of new life; through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.**

**Lydia Katherine Koecher**

**Born: September 16, 2021**

**Baptized: December 12, 2021**

**Parents are Daniel and Mari Koecher**

**Sponsors are Colin and Megan Pechacek**

**Grandparents are Steven and Lara Koecher**

**TIME WITH CHILDREN**

**Rev. Chris Myers**

**SONG OF BLESSING**

***Stay awake (clap, clap). Be ready (stomp, stomp).  
You do not know the hour when the Lord is coming.  
Stay awake (clap, clap). Be ready (stomp, stomp).  
The Lord is coming soon.***

**SPECIAL MUSIC**

***Celtic Advent Carol***

**Chancel Choir**

## Celebrating the Meal

(All Christians, regardless of denomination, tradition or age are welcome at the table of our Lord.)

### ***The Invitation to the Meal***

**L:** In love, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the coming of our Lord, Emmanuel. It is a way marked by peace, grace, hope and great joy. And here at his table, we experience a foretaste of God's kingdom come down to earth.

### ***The Great Thanksgiving***

**L:** The Lord be with you.

**P:** **And also with you.**

**L:** Lift up your hearts.

**P:** **We lift them up to the Lord.**

**L:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**P:** **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

**L:** We offer you praise, O Lord our God, ...

### ***The Words of Institution***

**L:** Together we rejoice in this holy meal as we remember the mystery of faith...

**All:** **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

### ***Prayer of Consecration***

### ***Distribution of the Elements***

*Hymns during the distribution of the elements:*

**Special Music – Do You Hear What I Hear – Jubilee Ringers**

### ***Come to the Table of Grace***

*Congregation join on refrain:*

***Come to the table of \*grace. Come to the table of \*grace.***

***This is God's table, it's not yours or mine. Come to the table of \*grace.***

***\*Additional stanzas: 2 peace, 3 love, 4 joy, 5 hope***

### ***One Bread, One Body***

*Congregation join on refrain:*

***One bread, one body, one Lord of all, one cup of blessing which we bless.***

***And we, though many, throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord.***

### ***Prayer of Thanksgiving***

**All:** We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**SONG** (Children preschool through grade 8 leave for Sunday School.)

*Jesus loves me! This I know, as he loved so long ago, Taking children on his knee, saying,  
"Let them come to me." Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.*

**Proclaiming the Word**

**GOSPEL LESSON**

**Luke 3:7-18**

**SERMON**

**Rev. Chris Myers**

**\*HYMN**

***O Come, O Come, Emmanuel***

*Unison*



1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran-som cap-tive  
2. O come, thou Day-spring, come and cheer our spir - its by thine  
3. O come, thou Wis-dom from on high, and or - der all things,  
4. O come, De-sire of na - tions, bind all peo-ples in one

Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here,  
ad - vent here; dis - perse the gloom-y clouds of night,  
far and nigh; to us the path of knowl - edge show,  
heart and mind; bid en - vy, strife and quar - rels cease;

*Refrain Harmony*

un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
and death's deep shad - ows put to flight. Re - joice, re - joice!  
and cause us in her ways to go.  
fill the whole world with heav - en's peace.

Em - man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

## **\*STATEMENT OF FAITH for Advent**

**L:** In quietness and darkness, in peace and confusion, Jesus Christ wants to make his home and meet his friends. He is the light of life:

**P:** **He is the hope for the world.**

**L:** In him there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant;

**P:** **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

**L:** He is the light of life:

**P:** **He is the hope of the world.**

**L:** In him there is neither black nor white, neither north nor south;

**P:** **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

**L:** He is the light of life:

**P:** **He is the hope of the world.**

**L:** In him there is neither male nor female, neither master nor servant;

**P:** **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

**L:** He is the light of life:

**P:** **He is the hope of the world.**

**L:** He is the light of life:

**P:** **He is the hope of the world. Amen.**

## **THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)**

Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.**

**...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

## **MOMENT OF GENEROSITY**

**Brad Williams**



**\*HYMN**

***Angels We Have Heard on High***

***Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.***

***Glo-----ri-a in excelsis De-o, Glo-----ri-a in excelsis De-o***

***Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song?***

***Glo-----ri-a in excelsis De-o, Glo-----ri-a in excelsis De-o***

***Come to Bethlehem and see, Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.***

***Glo-----ri-a in excelsis De-o, Glo-----ri-a in excelsis De-o***

***See Him in a manger laid, Whom the choirs of angels praise;  
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise.***

***Glo-----ri-a in excelsis De-o, Glo-----ri-a in excelsis De-o***

**\*BLESSING**

**POSTLUDE**

*Note about offering: During the pandemic we are not passing the offering plate. We thankfully receive your gifts, tithes and offerings in the offering plate on the back table. Your generosity is the engine that powers our church community. Thank you.*

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**Offering QR Code**

1. On your mobile device, open your Camera app or QR Code app
2. Point your camera at the QR Code
3. Click the tab 'Give Online'

**Assisting in today's worship service are:**

<b>Liturgist:</b>	<i>Larissa Lueck</i>
<b>Coffee Fellowship:</b>	<i>Beth Rausch – Welcoming Committee</i>
<b>Deacons:</b>	<i>Marshall Skule, Karen Lloyd, Suzanne Hagen, Jean Most, Traci Hagberg</i>
<b>Welcomers:</b>	<i>Jill Paulson, Lu Lueck</i>
<b>Nursery:</b>	<i>Kahla Fuller</i>
<b>Organist:</b>	<i>Marsha Pearson</i>
<b>Video Team:</b>	<i>Jeff Hoffman, Mike Stifter</i>
<b>Trustee:</b>	<i>Jeff Hoffman</i>
<b>Counters:</b>	<i>Jane Truesdill, Jean Smith</i>
<b>Music Coordinator &amp; Bell Director:</b>	<i>Jamie Mills</i>
<b>Choir Director:</b>	<i>Sarah Plum</i>
<b>Church Moderator:</b>	<i>Joel Larsen</i>
<b>Office Administrator:</b>	<i>Missy Luedtke</i>
<b>Youth Pastors:</b>	<i>Alex and Sarah Plum</i>
<b>Minister for Community:</b>	<i>Rev. Dave Ostendorf</i>
<b>CE Minister:</b>	<i>Rev. Stacy Johnson Myers</i>
<b>Senior Pastor:</b>	<i>Rev. Chris Myers</i>

*Altar table flowers are given by Eunice Filkins and the Sippel and Beatty Families in memory of Dan Filkins.*

**Treasurer's Report**

	<u>Dec 5, 2021</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 10,310	\$ 438,348
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,262	\$ 453,838

A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

\*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

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**Advent Evening Prayer:** This Wednesday is our last Advent Evening Prayer Worship Service. Join us at 6:30 pm for this half hour worship service. Confirmation, church intern and youth groups will join us for worship then go to class or youth group. Wednesday meals will be served in both 'in person' and 'to go' formats. There will be no Wednesday service on Wed, Dec. 22. Our Wednesday Schedule will be:

- 3:45-5:15 pm Wednesday School
- 5:15-6:00 pm Family Meals (sign up by 4:00 pm Tuesday)
- 5:45-6:30 pm Bell Practice
- 6:30-7:00 pm Evening Prayer and beginning of Confirmation/Interns/Youth Group
- 7:00-7:30 pm Second half of Confirmation/Interns/Youth Group
- 7:00-8:00 pm Choir Practice

**Advent Devotional:** Pick yours up today!

**Christmas Eve Worship:** This Christmas Eve we will offer two indoor, in-person worship services, a 4:00 pm Family Service with Communion and an 11:00 pm Service with Choir and Communion. We will also livestream both of the services. Following CDC guidelines, we ask all people to mask when indoors in large groups. We will need 5 liturgists at each worship service and candle lighters for the luminaries. Please use the sign-up sheet at church or contact the church office.

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

**Those who are ill or recovering:**

Peg Thompson, Roger Hirstein, Jim, Wendy MacDougall (wife of our Association Minister Rob), Edna (friend of the Danielsons and Petersons), Rosalie Harper (cousin on JoAnn Lentz), Donna Moseman, Joan Hyland, Charles Hoffman (father of Jeff Hoffman), Tom (friend of Traci), Peter Kwong, Dirk Ficca, Neal Prochnow, Marjorie Faulks, David Lewis (friend of Jan Hansen), Dave Mountain, Jacob (son of Kurt & Jodi Helmrick), Tom (Lisa Plackner's dad), Deb Larson (Jen Meyer's mother), Anna Anderson, Jan Husak (mother of Juli Okal), Josh Budensiek (nephew of Sheila Peterson)

**Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:**

- For our young people getting ready for the Children's Christmas program on Sunday, December 19, that they may kindle joy in all of us
- For our new church janitor Farnum Fuller as he takes over for Dave Mountain, may he be given strength!
- For those that attended the recent Inquirer's Class, that they may find a church home that nourishes them
- For our church musicians Marsha Pearson, Jamie Mills, Sarah Plum, Dave Reilly and others who are preparing for Advent Evening Prayer and Christmas services, may they bring the hope and joy of the Christian faith to us all
- For those who continue to support our church's ministry with their tithes, offerings and gifts--you are all a blessing

**Prayers for our World:**

- For those seeking to quickly identify the Omnicron variant and help us deal with it effectively, may God speed their work
- For all of us trying to live hopefully as the pandemic keeps going on and on, may God give us strength and wisdom
- For the gift of Advent, a time to wait and watch for the signs of God's presence all around us—may we pay attention
- For our stressed out world, may we find the peace of Christ and the joy of faith
- For the 13,000 Afghani refugees at Fort McCoy, WI, that they may be strengthened in their journey

**Prayers of Thanksgiving:**

- For Diane Crist and Judy Grimm who decorated our church and Mark and Laura Anderson who decorated our outside church pots, bless you for giving us Christmas cheer
- For Loral Keil and Brian Miller who just celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, may you continue to grow in love
- For the Christmas tree donated by Linn Lawrence's family, may its beauty linger in us all
- For the birth of Thea Jane Querna born to Jenny and David Querna (and proud grandparents Wendy and John) 8 weeks early, mom is home, baby is still in hospital but doing well at 3 pounds and 16.5 inches long
- For the gift of the Giving Tree and the families it will bless
- For the Shoebox Ministry to the men at Kinnic Rehab, that it may kindle hope
- For our choir and jubilee ringers helping to lead worship today—may your notes bring joy to our hearts

**For those grieving the loss of loved ones:**

- For Luella, grandmother of Jamie Mills, who died this past week, may she rest God's strong arms
- For those mourning Jean Hagberg, Donnie Mertens, Judith Permann, Dorothy Friedl, Barb Wall and Jeff Peterson, may you not mourn alone
- For the 790,000 Americans and over 5.27 million worldwide who have died of Covid, may they not have died in vain

If you have people you wish to include on our prayer list, please contact the church office or one of the pastors.

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: Philippians 4:4-9**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

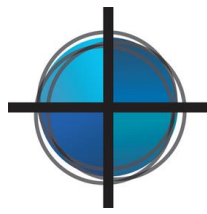
**GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 3:7-18**

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.



FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH, UCC  
RIVER FALLS

## ***Sharing Our Blessings With An Attitude Of Gratitude***

### ***2021 Year End Gifting Opportunities***

This is the time of year when many of us consider offering charitable contributions to our favorite organizations, in gratitude for the impact these organizations have on our life. We hope that you consider First Congregational Church an important part of your life. Here are a few ideas to help you know the impact your giving can have on you and our congregation. **Whether you choose to designate your year-end financial support to our general fund (annual operating budget) or to help retire our building debt, please know that your generosity is valued, appreciated, and most certainly needed at this time.**

#### **Cash Gifts**

A contribution of cash or check is the simplest way to offer a financial commitment from your assets or income. If you choose to itemize deductions, your contribution could be included each year.

#### **Electronic Payment of Your Commitment**

First Congregational Church provides automatic Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) for your convenience. Our EFT process is like payment programs offered by utilities and health care providers. Your contribution is automatically withdrawn from a regular checking, savings, or credit union account, but **ONLY** with your authorization.

#### **Appreciated Property**

You may find that a gift of common stock, bonds, mutual funds, other securities, appreciated property, donor advised funds, real estate holdings, a personal residence, a second home, or other land, could offer a significant tax savings. You may be able to avoid the tax on your gains and deduct the value as a charitable contribution.

#### **Age 70.5 or Older – Qualified Charitable Distribution • Age 72 or Older – Required Minimum Distribution**

Anyone age 70.5 or older can take a Qualified Charitable Distribution from their Individual Retirement (IRA) account. Those age 72 or older **must** take a Required Minimum Distribution from their IRA each year. In either situation, you may directly transfer your IRA funds to First Congregational Church. Specifically, a donor may offer a direct/outright gift each year (in any amount up to \$100,000 for individuals and \$200,000 for couples) from his/her/their IRA account, and the distribution will be excluded from gross income for tax purposes. Those who own a Roth IRA can also benefit from this strategy.

#### **Commodities**

For some farmers, offering a contribution of dairy, grain, or livestock rather than cash, can increase the tax benefit of the gift. The tax consequences of the gift differ depending on whether the donor is an active farmer or a landlord.

#### **Employer Matching Funds**

We invite you to consult with your employer to determine whether a matching gift from your company can double the value of your contribution to our congregation.

#### **Good Counsel Is Essential**

The information presented is not intended to be legal advice. **Your contribution may or may not be tax deductible, depending on how the current tax law impacts your circumstances.** We encourage you to seek the counsel of your financial planner and/or tax advisor. He/she can help you to determine the most tax-wise method of offering your financial contribution, while satisfying your financial planning needs. If you are seeking more specific guidance, please **contact Brad Williams, Church Business Manager (612-723-1873 or [bradley@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:bradley@firstchurchrf.org))** who will direct you to a professional advisor who can answer your questions. First Congregational Church reserves the right to decline any contribution if it would not be in its best interests to accept it.



## Free Money for Church Ministries

The church has created an Amazon Smile account through which the church can receive a portion of the price of each purchase you make through Amazon. It is important to know that you need to do two things for the church to receive this money. First, go to Amazon Smile by typing in [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and then add First Congregational Church River Falls to your Amazon Smile. Second, every time you order you must order through your Smile account by going to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com). Once you do this, the church will receive 0.5% of each eligible order. Please contact the church office if you have questions.

Last quarter the church received over \$200.00 for this account, but that amount could grow greatly if you add the church to your Amazon account. Do it today!

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GOOD NEWS  
GREAT JOY  
FOR ALL THE PEOPLE

**Christmas Eve**  
**WORSHIP SERVICES**

**4pm** Candle Light Family Worship  
with Communion

**11pm** Candle Light Family Worship  
with Choir and Communion



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110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI  
715-425-2052 [www.firstchurchrf.org](http://www.firstchurchrf.org)